

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday September 18. 1711.

IT is but with too clear a Sight of the present Confusions of our Commerce in general, that I complain'd in my last, of the Alteration in the very Manner and Temper of the Trading part of this Nation; how it is chang'd from a plain, fair, punctual, honourable Way of Dealing, to a sharpening, cunning, undermining, engrossing, monopolizing Way of Trade; how many Instances can I give of this, in the common Way of Dealing, since I have made any Observations of Trade in this City!

To Instance in a few Things within our reach, and in your View — Such as the

Combination of the Lighter-Men in the River of *Thames*, the Contract of the Coal-Owners at *New-Castle*, and the Concert between the Fitters there, and the Undertakers here; by which all your Coals were, as it were, gotten into one Hand, and not only the Price of Freight run down on one Hand, to the Ruin of the Navigation, but the Price of Coals run up on the other Hand, that had it gone on a little longer, they would have made the City of *London* pay what Price they (the Contractors) thought fit, for their Coals — And to, such a height was this Combination come, that the Magistrates, say, the Queen and Counsel

Counsel could not suppress, till it was done effectually by the Parliament.

The Town has been full of like Combinations in other Things: The Funds have been Engros'd, your Lotteries Monopoliz'd and Huckster'd, that they might put the Dice upon the People, and Stock-Jobbers them out of their Money; your very Wharfingers are in a Confederacy, to enable themselves to act in a Body, and deal more at Swords-point with the Merchants; I could run on to many particulars, which, in Time, also, may come in my Way, to talk more particularly of; but that which at present is more especially worth Observation, is the Affair of our Vintners; and really, tho' I do not care to Embark in private Cases, between Man and Man, yet this Case does require some Observation; I shall do it with as little Injury as possible.

Indeed, when I first look'd on the Case, and saw only the Surface of Things, I thought hard of Messieurs Brooks and Bellier, turning from Merchants and Importers, to be Retailers, and setting up Taverns in every Cellar; and as I would always oppose the Encroachment of one part of Trade upon another, because it lessens the Circulation of Trade, and Employs fewer Hands, so I thought them much to blame; but when I came to enquire into the Case, I found it quite otherwise, that the Original lay in the Vintners, who finding a great Quantity of Wines lodg'd in one Hand, and that this one Hand would be under a necessity of Selling, Combine together to sink the Price, blow upon the Wines (*as we say*) that they might make a Prey of the Merchant, and get the Wines for little or nothing, at last.

I do not go about to Examine into Proofs for this, because I hear the Vintners every Day own it — But this it seems was not all, after they had thus fly-blow'd the Wines, as they thought — The Merchants driven by Necessity to find some Way to put off their Goods, and knowing that they were neat and good in Quality, they be-

thought themselves of this Expedient of Retailing, and publishes their Designs in the Prints — The Vintners Alarm'd a little at this, and to knock this new Project on the Head, make a new offer at buying the Wines — The Merchants willing to go on in the true Road of Business, close with the offer, and thus they make a Bargain, and the Vintners buy their Wines — The Merchants lay down their new Proposal of Retailing, and the Trade would of course have return'd into its own Channel — When behold, the Vintners who had bought the Wines but to amuse the Merchants, and put them by their New Undertaking; when they thought they had brought this to pass, and had got the Merchants, to publish in Print, that they had desisted from their Retailing — Then they, the Vintners, having carry'd the Fraud on, as far as they could — Of a sudden stop their Hands, refuse to take the Wines they had bargain'd for, and send the Merchants Word they will not meddle with them.

If I have wrong'd the Vintners in this, it must be their own Faults, for I had this Account from themselves.

Is this now, like the manner our Trade was carry'd on in formerly? This is the Modern Methods which I complain of, that are crept into Trade, that corrupt our Trading People, and which is the Thing that I say affects even our Trade itself; for certainly the Shifts and Frauds, that unfair Dealers practise in Trade, tho' they are chargeable only on those People that practise them, yet when they become National and Popular, they are a Wound to Trade itself, and weaken the general Interest of the Nation; and this is the Reason why I take this Notice of it, for I know nothing as to Persons, in this Case.

I must own, this Breach among them, has had some good Effects among us, in matter of Trade, which I can but touch at here, and may explain hereafter.

1. It has really restor'd the Town to drinking of WINE again— Which for 15 Years past we cannot properly say they have had any Thing of, but the Colour.
2. It has restor'd the Trade, which was sunk from an Importation of 40000 Pipes a Year, as it was when I was Concern'd in the *Portugal Wine-Trade*, to about 10000 Pipes, all the rest being supply'd by our Home Growth, a Word not fully understood, but which I may also explain to you.
3. It has effectually destroy'd the Coopersing, *Anglic'd*, Brewing Trade, which was now become a Practice, even in the Cellars of the Merchants, and was call'd by a Modern Name, viz. *Making up their Wines*, where all the Tricks, Cheats, and abominable Poisoning Mixtures were made, which have Debauch'd the Pint Pot all over the Nation, of which at large by itself.
4. It has reduc'd the Price of Wine, which as it has been Extravagant in its kind, so it has been Arbitrary in the meer Direction of the Vintners, who as it now appears, are able very well to afford their Wines at 6 d. a Quart less than they us'd to impose upon the Town.
5. Infinite Frauds and Cheats of the

Wine-Trade will be discover'd, and I hope for the future, prevented; for if once we can come to a usage of drinking our Wines near as they come from the Country where they grow, all the vile Practices of the Brewing and Mixing Wines, either by the Vintners or Merchants, will die of Course.

6. When we come to the true Taste of Wines, perhaps we shall not be so very eager to fall into the *French Wine-Trade* at the Peace, as some People believe, especially we shall not run on in the present Madness of giving 5s. 6d. and 7 s. a Bottle for Claret.

There is much more to be said to this Case, as opportunity offers; the present Demand for these Wines, which is now so great all over the Town, Convinces us what need there has been to rectifie the Wine-Trade, and how the People have been impos'd upon.

What is said as to the Ruin it will be to the Vintners, and how many of them will be destroy'd by it, is, if it could have no Answer, a Thing of Moment; I shall at present answer it only, *having no Room for a full Reply*, in the Ingenious Confession of a very Honest Vintner in the Town, speaking of the very Thing I am now upon—— It has Ruin'd our Trade, says he, but I confess, *its all our own Fault*.

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
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A D V E R T.

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 Several Boxes are just now sent again into Sweden, and I hear the Czar's Physicians have order'd it into the Army. If with some Merchants would send it into Denmark, it might do much good there, and large Profit to the Sender.

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Printed for and sold by John Baker at the Black-Boy
Pater-Noster Row. 1711.